DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 620 FL 018 064

AUTHOR Arrieta, Kutz; And Others
TITLE How Ergative Is Basque?
PUB DATE Oct 86
NOTE 14p.; In: Proceedings from the Annual Eastern States Conference on Linguistics (3rd, Pittsburgh, PA, October 10-11, 1986). The complete Proceedings are available from the Department of Linguistics, The Ohio State University, Columbus.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Basque; *Language Patterns; Language Research; Linguistic Theory; *Semantics; Structural Analysis (Linguistics); *Syntax; Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS *Ergativity

ABSTRACT

The extent to which Basque displays ergative characteristics (an ergative language treats the underlying subject of intransitive clauses alike in some manner and differently from the underlying subject of transitive clauses) in its syntax is examined. The amount of evidence needed to conclude that Basque or any other language is ergative is discussed, and conflicting claims regarding the Basque language's ergativity are addressed. It is concluded that: (1) making general pronouncements about the syntax of a language can be a mistake if the claim is based only on cursory examination of a single construction type; (2) Basque does not exhibit a syntax that shows the same type of alignment of core semantico-syntactic relations as do non-ergative languages; (3) the presence of a variety of syntactic alignments in Basque provides support for the tripartite division of the core semantico-syntactic relations into transitive subject, transitive object, and intransitive subject; and (4) Basque does not display any "split ergativity" by which ergative morphological patterns are found only in some formal categories. (MSE)

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by

Kutz Arrieta, Brian D. Joseph, and Jane Smirniotopoulos

from

Proceedings of the Third

EASTERN STATES CONFERENCE ON LINGUISTICS

The University of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

October 10-11, 1986

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HOW ERGATIVE IS BASQUE?

Kutz Arrieta, Brian D. Joseph, & Jane Şmirniotopoulos
The Ohio State University

0. INTRODUCTION

The question of whether Basque is or is not an ergative language might be regarded by some to be a nonissue, for Basque is often cited as a prototypical example of an ergative language, as in Comrie 1973, for example. However, Anderson 1976, in an oft-cited paper, has put forth the provocative claim that Basque does not display ergative syntax at all,[1] and thus is not a fully ergative language. Given this controversy, then, we plan to present here material relevant to the question of the extent to which Basque displays ergative characteristics in its syntax, and more generally, to address the question of how much evidence is needed in order to conclude that Basque--or any language, for that matter--is indeed ergative or not.[2]

1. ON THE NOTION OF ERGATIVITY

Because there is some potential for confusion in terminology regarding the use of several terms that figure prominently in this discussion, it is important to give here a brief explanation of what is meant by the term "ergative language". The ergative versus nonergative distinction hinges on how a language treats what Dixon (1979: 61ff.) refers to as the "three core semantico-syntactic relations". In the most general terms, an ergative language is one which treats the (underlying) **subject** of intransitive clauses and the (underlying) **direct object** of transitive clauses alike in some way, and differently from the (underlying) **subject** of transitive clauses. The parameters along which an intransitive subject and a transitive object are treated alike may be morphological/morphosyntactic (e.g. case-marking) or syntactic (e.g. possibilities for coordination and conjunction reduction). On the other hand, nonergative languages, sometimes referred to as nominative-accusative or accusative languages though we purposely avoid such terminology here, treat intransitive and transitive subjects in the same manner, different from transitive objects. The alignments of these elements in the two types of languages are displayed in (1), where the abbreviation **TS** stands for transitive subject, **IS** for intransitive subject, and **TO** for transitive object:[3]

(1)

"nonergative" alignment	TRANSITIVE SUBJECT (TS)
	INTRANSITIVE SUBJECT (IS)

"ergative" alignment	TRANSITIVE OBJECT (TO)

Ergative alignment in the sentence patterns of a language can be illustrated by the

sentences in (2) from Basque; sentences (2a) and (2b) represent typical Basque intransitive sentences, while (2c) is an example of a typical Basque transitive sentence:

(2) a. Azeria ibiltzen da
fox/ABSOLUTIVE walk/GER AUX/3SG.SUBJ
'The fox walks'
b. Oiloa ibiltzen da
chicken/ABSOLUTIVE
'The chicken walks'
c. Azeriak oiloa jaten du
fox/ERG chicken/ABS eat/GER AUX/3SG.SUBJ+3SG.OBJ
'The fox eats the chicken'.

Crucial for the demonstration of ergative alignment is the fact that the intransitive subject and the transitive object are both marked with the same case, labelled ABSOLUTIVE, which is distinct from the case of the transitive subject, labelled ERGATIVE. Any other case assignment, e.g. those in (3), yields unacceptable sentences:

(3) a. *Azeriak ibiltzen da
ERG
b. *Azeria oiloa jaten du
ABS
c. *Azeria oiloak jaten du
ABS ERG
(* on reading of 'Fox eats chicken' / OK as "Chicken eats fox').

Nonergative alignment in the sentence patterns of a language can be illustrated by the sentences in (4) from Latin, (4a) being the typical intransitive pattern, and (4b) the typical transitive pattern; here, the intransitive subject and the transitive subject are marked with the same case (nominative), distinct from that of the transitive object (accusative) and moreover, the use of the object case (accusative) with the subject nominal is impossible:

(4) a. Marcus sternuit / *Marcum sternuit.
NOM sneeze/3SG.PRES ACC
' Marcus sneezes'
b. Marcus Augustum videt / *Marcum Augustum videt
NOM ACC see/3SG.PRES ACC
'Marcus sees Augustus'

It is clear, then, that languages can show different alignments in their treatment of core semantico-syntactic relations. These differences have led to two main questions concerning ergativity: First, how does the ergative/nonergative distinction fit into a general typology of natural languages? Second, how are the differences between ergative and nonergative languages to be analyzed?

The answer to the first question is generally agreed upon in the literature, namely that (completely) ergative and (completely) nonergative languages are at opposite ends of a continuum along which all languages can be placed--this is the view of Moravcsik 1978 and Comrie 1980, for instance. However, two main and conflicting hypotheses have emerged as possible answers to the second question; these are given in (5):

(5) a. Ergative and nonergative languages differ fundamentally in the match-up between the grammatical relations subject and object and the core semantic functions agent and patient
b. Ergative and nonergative languages differ only superficially in terms of how they treat the grammatical relations of subject and object.

Implicit in (5a), a position held for instance by Schmerling 1979 and Trechsel 1982, is the claim that generalizations across languages based on a semantically oriented notion of "subject" (e.g. as agent) are not possible. For example, in Schmerling's and Trechsel's system, based in a categorial grammar framework, syntactic subjecthood and objecthood are defined by the types of categories that serve as input to and result from the operations that combine elements in the building up of sentences. Thus, transitive patients (our TO) and intransitive agents (our IS) in ergative languages count, in terms of how sentences are constructed, as syntactic subject, for they are the elements that combine with members of the category "intransitive verb"[4] to yield a sentence. On the other hand, the differently marked transitive agent (our TS) counts as a syntactic object. In such a system, therefore, there is no generalization to be made across "subjects", as the term is generally understood for nonergative languages. Thus this particular proposal contrasts with the general approach of the second position, (5b). As outlined above, this latter position, most notably espoused by Anderson 1976, entails a claim that the same notion of subject is syntactically, but not morphologically, relevant for both types of languages, with intransitive "subjects" and transitive "subjects" having the same status in ergative as in nonergative languages.

Thus proponents of (5a) claim that in some instances, surface morphological ergativity mirrors the syntactic structure of the language while Anderson claims that morphological ergativity reflects nothing about the syntactic structure of the language. It was in the context of this general claim regarding the relationship between morphological expression and syntax in ergative languages that Anderson presented his analysis of Basque and more specifically his claim concerning the lack of ergative syntax in that language.

2. EVALUATION OF ANDERSON'S CLAIMS REGARDING BASQUE

Anderson's claim is that the notion of subject in an "ergative" language such as Basque really is not radically different from that found in nonergative languages. More specifically, he claims that--despite morphological and morphosyntactic indications such as case-marking rules to the contrary--the **syntax** of Basque treats transitive and intransitive subjects in the same way and moreover treats them as distinct from transitive objects. While this is part of a line of argumentation that he pursues for several morphologically ergative languages including Tongan, Kâte, and Abaza, we examine

here only the case the Anderson makes for Basque. However, if we are right that he has not really demonstrated his point for Basque, it stands to reason that the other languages he discusses should also be reexamined.[5]

Anderson essentially brings forth one argument in support of his claim for Basque, and this comes from a set of EQUI-like constructions in the language which he treats as a single construction-type. In particular, he introduces EQUI-NP-Deletion sentences with a main predicate **nahi** 'want' and equates that pattern with a purpose-clause construction involving the verb **joan** 'go' and a subordinate purpose clause verb marked with the suffix **-tzera-**. It is the purpose-clause manifestation of EQUI which provides the real basis for his argument, for he shows that the subject of the subordinate purpose verb marked with **-tzera**--regardless of whether it is a transitive or an intransitive subject--is not only absent on the surface but is also interpreted as coreferent with the matrix clause subject. The relevant sentences are given in (6)--the Ø marks the absence of a subject with the verb in the purpose-clause:

(6) a. Ø dantza-tzera-t joan da
dance-**tzera** go/INF AUX.3SG
'He has gone Ø to dance'
b. Ø txakurr-aren hil-tzera joan da
dog-GEN kill-**tzera** go/INF AUX.3SG
'He has gone Ø to kill the dog'

In these sentences, the matrix subject (actually unexpressed here due to the workings of Subject-Pronoun-Drop in Basque) is an intransitive subject, since the matrix verb is the intransitive verb 'to go'; thus the intransitive subject of 'dance' in (6a) is interpreted as coreferent with the intransitive matrix subject of 'go', and the transitive subject of 'kill' in (6b) likewise is interpreted as coreferent with the intransitive matrix subject. This pattern of interpretation in itself suggests a nonergative alignment, since intransitive and transitive subjects in the purpose clause are treated alike, but more significant in Anderson's terms is the fact that an understood object of a transitive purpose-clause verb cannot be read as coreferent with the matrix clause intransitive subject; this fact is shown in (7):

(7) Ø ikhus-tera-t joan da
see-**tzera** go/INF AUX.3SG
'He$_i$ has gone Ø$_i$ to see him$_j$' /*'He$_i$ has gone for him$_j$ to see him$_i$'.

The significance of the impossibility of such a reading in (7) is that it shows that not only do intransitive and transitive subjects behave alike in this construction but more importantly they behave differently from, and thus are set off from and opposed to, transitive objects. This is exactly the alignment found in nonergative languages (see (1) above), so Anderson concludes from this that in Basque--as well as in other ergative languages that show similar patterning--"the morphology is a misleading indicator of syntactic function", i.e. Basque syntax is not ergative.

As the facts have been presented, one might well agree with Anderson in his evaluation of the extent to which Basque is syntactically ergative. However, we feel Anderson has erred considerably in drawing the conclusion he did.

For one thing, his conclusion about the syntactic nature of Basque is highly theory-bound. The EQUI-like construction from which he infers syntactic nonergativity is one which in most current syntactic frameworks would not involve a syntactic deletion at all, but rather would be treated merely as a matter of control, i.e. semantic interpretation, and not a matter of the syntactic structure of the sentence itself. While it is certainly true that such an argument could be made against a good many analyses couched in frameworks that are no longer current, there is still some validity to this objection. In particular, the facts that need to be described and accounted for remain constant over different frameworks, so that resulting accounts can often be said to be equivalent in terms of what the overall grammar must say about the facts. Frameworks differ, however, in terms of how the burden of accounting for these facts in a grammar is divided up, with--in the case at hand--some frameworks assigning more work to the syntax, for example, and others assigning more of a role to the semantics. It seems fair to say here that claims about the syntactic nature of a language can be reevaluated as new ideas develop about what constitutes a syntactic phenomenon in a language, and it is in this way that the theory-boundness of Anderson's argument invites a reconsideration of his conclusion.

This first objection, however, is not the major problem with Anderson's proposal regarding Basque. His biggest mistake comes in grossly overstating his case; in particular, he makes a broad generalization about the notion of subject in Basque based on an analysis of no more than a single construction-type in the language. It is well-known that anomalous patterns can be found in many (perhaps all) languages that are not representative of their general typological status-- for example, it has occasionally been mentioned that English verb + noun compounds such as those in (8) display ergative patterning:

(8) a. bird-chirping (<--- the birds chirp)
b. fox-hunting (<--- PRO hunts foxes, not foxes hunt PRO)

in that the "incorporated" noun in the compound corresponds to an intransitive subject (as in (8a)) or a transitive object (as in (8b)) but not to a transitive subject (as with the second "source" in (8b)). Whether the generalization that such compounds systematically exclude compounding of transitive subjects is true or not,[6] the point is well-taken. Even if the forms in (8) display ergative patterning, no one would say that English is syntactically an ergative language.

Yet this is precisely what Anderson has done for Basque. The EQUI construction in general and the purpose-clause construction in particular which Anderson draws on for his argument are exceptional in several ways and thus do not really permit one to draw broad conclusions about the nature of Basque syntax.

For one thing, at least one of the predicates Anderson relies on in constructing his argument--**nahi**, meaning 'want'--belongs to a semantic class which Dixon (1979: 115-6) has suggested universally involves subjects of the nonergative-language variety.

Dixon calls this the class of modifiers of lexical verbs and notes that verbs like **CAN** and **MUST** always involve identity of the "subject" (to be understood in a neutral sense) of **CAN/MUST** with the lower verb and that **WANT** almost always does. Thus, it is not clear that the behavior of a predicate meaning 'want' is good evidence of the overall syntactic type of a language, if it is universally aligned in the manner Dixon suggests.

Second, within Basque, it turns out that the distribution of the **-tzera-** complements is highly restricted. The ending **-tzera** contains the case suffix **-ra**, which marks directionals, and it only attaches to nominalized verbs. Even though the ending itself can attach to any nominalized verb, the form with **-tzera** can cooccur only with the directional verbs **joan** 'go' and **etorri** 'come' as matrix verb. Purpose clauses with other matrix verbs, even the verb **dizan** 'to be', are marked with the suffix **-tzeko** (on which more below), as in (9):

(9) idazteko da / *idaztera da
write-**tzeko** be/3SG write-**tzera**
'It is for writing'

Third, in the syntagm consisting of a verb marked with **-tzera** and the verb **joan** 'go', the verb **joan** is actually rather auxiliary-like in its meaning and behavior. This is especially clear in nonpast sentences, where this syntagm has a future tense interpretation (and actually shows the same ambiguity as English be going to), as in (10):

(10) urrengo urtean ikastera nijoa
next/GEN year/LOC learn-**tzera** go/1SG.PRES
'Next year I am going to learn'.

Auxiliaries are notorious for the difficulties of syntactic analysis they present, so it would be dangerous to draw any general conclusions about the syntax of a language from the behavior of its auxiliaries. Moreover, to go back to a point made earlier, if **joan** in this syntagm really is an auxiliary, then there may not be anything like a syntactic deletion of its subject; instead, the subject of **joan** would be the subject of what Anderson has taken as a purpose clause, and the impossibility of the object coreference reading could be a function of the semantics of the particular auxiliary. Again also, in Dixon's terms, auxiliaries are universally modifiers of lexical verbs, so that there would be no identity of subject between two clauses to use as a criterion for assigning the language to a nonergative type. It would be possible thus to analyze the Basque **-tzera** sentences with past tense **joan** as displaying auxiliary-type behavior but not meaning, in the same way that main verb **have** in English can be inverted just as auxiliary **have** can be, as in (11):

(11) a. Have you any idea what this paper is about?
b. Have you any wool?

More importantly, though, there are many other EQUI-like constructions in Basque that do not show the nonergative alignment Anderson's posits for the **-tzera** clauses. While they do not show purely ergative alignment, as becomes evident below, nonetheless

they indicate that the **-tzera** construction really is anomalous and thus should not serve as the basis for any general inferences about Basque syntax.

For example, purpose clauses with verbs other than **joan** 'go' are expressed with the suffix **-tzeko**. With these, the overt occurrence of a subject or an object is permitted in the subordinate clause, though more usually, one of these is absent on the surface; this missing argument can be interpreted as a transitive subject, as in (12a), an intransitive subject, as in (12b), or--significantly for the point being made here--a transitive object, as in (12c):

(12) a. Miren$_i$ Jonetik ezkutatzen da bera Ø$_i$ ez enganatzeko
Miren/ABS John/GEN hide/GER AUX/3SG him/ABS TS not trick-**tzeko**
'Miren$_i$ hides from John in order not Ø$_i$ to trick him'

b. Mirenek Jon maite du ez Ø$_i$ sufritzeko
Miren/ERG John/ABS love AUX not IS suffer-**tzeko**
'Miren$_i$ loves John in order not Ø$_i$ to suffer'

c. Miren Jonetik ezkutatzen da hark Ø ez enganatzeko
Miren/ABS John/GEN hide/GER AUX/3SG him/ERG TO not trick-**tzeko**
'Miren$_i$ hides from John$_j$ in order for him$_{j/k}$ not to trick her$_i$ (= Ø)'

Thus in the **-tzeko** purpose clauses, structurally there is a parallel to the "EQUI-NP Deletion" which Anderson posits for the **-tzera** clauses, in that there is a missing argument in the purpose clause which is controlled by an element in the matrix clause; however, in the **-tzeko** clauses, the missing argument can be any of the core relations under consideration here. There is therefore no nonergative alignment with the **-tzeko** clause type of "deletion" (so to speak), and thus no reason to posit nonergative alignment throughout the syntax. It is certainly true, though, that this construction does not exhibit an overt **ergative** alignment (as it would if, for example, only transitive objects and intransitive subjects could be the missing arguments); however, the existence of such a pattern suffices to demonstrate that Anderson's claim of thoroughly nonergative alignment in Basque is false.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the adverbial clause construction with the suffix **-gabe**, meaning 'without X-ing'. As with the **-tzera** and the **-tzeko** clauses, there can be a missing argument in the **-gabe** clause, and, as in the **-tzeko** clauses but not the **-tzera** clauses, that missing argument can be interpreted as a transitive subject, an intransitive subject, or--significantly for the position advocated here--as a transitive object. This last crucial fact is shown by the ambiguity of the sentences in (13)--the two readings are given as (13a) and (13b). The ambiguity is induced in part by the fact that **besteak** 'another' can be either an absolutive plural--and thus interpreted here as a transitive object while the missing argument is a transitive subject--or an ergative singular--and thus interpreted here as a transitive subject while the missing argument is a transitive object:

(13) a. Bata joan da besteak Ø ikusi gabe
one/ABS.SG go AUX/3SG other/ABS.PL (TS) see **-gabe**
'One goes without Ø seeing the others' (TS as missing argument)
b. Bata joan da besteak Ø ikusi gabe
one/ABS.SG go AUX/3SG other/ERG.SG (TO) see **-gabe**
'One goes without the other seeing (Ø = him)' (TO as missing argument).

A final, and perhaps most compelling, piece of counterevidence to Anderson's claim comes from the fact that there are some ways in which the syntax of Basque distinguishes between transitive and intransitive subjects. Such a distinction is in keeping with an ergative alignment but not with a nonergative one, hence it runs counter to the predictions made by Anderson's analysis.

The difference is one that shows up in Basque relative clauses; while a definitive account of relativization in Basque is well beyond the scope of the present paper and thus is not attempted here (see de Rijk 1972 for some discussion), at least one aspect of the syntax of relative clauses seems relevant to our present discussion. In particular, it seems that there is a difference in the possible positions that a head noun can have with respect to the relative clause, depending on whether the head noun is interpreted as--i.e. is coreferent with--a transitive subject in the relative clause itself or an intransitive subject. Thus, in (14), where the Ø marks the missing argument in the relative clause:

(14) a. Bertsolaria da Ø bertsoak egiten ditu-n-ak
poet/ABS is TS poems/ABS.PL do/GER AUX/3SG.SUBJ+3PL.OBJ-REL-ERG.SG
'A poet is one who does poems'
b. *Bertsoak egiten ditunak bertsolaria da

the head noun **bertsolaria** 'poet', which corresponds to a transitive subject in the relative clause, can only stand before the relative clause and not after it. However, as shown in (15):

(15) a. Ø kantatzen ibilitzen gera-n-ak bertsolariak gera
IS sing/GER walk/GER are/1PL-REL-ABS.PL poets/ABS.PL are/1PL
'We who sing, (we) are poets' (literally: "We who walk singing...")
b. Bertsolariak gera Ø kantatzen ibiltzen geranak

when the head noun corresponds to an intransitive subject in the relative clause, then it can be placed either before or after the relative clause. While it is not clear to us exactly how such a syntactic fact is to be stated formally--and thus we leave that as a matter for further research--its significance is that it shows one way in which the syntax of Basque must make a distinction between transitive subjects and intransitive subjects.[7] Accordingly, the sort of alignment implicit in Anderson's claims regarding Basque syntax is not realized across all of the syntactic patterns of the language.

3. CONCLUSION

There are several conclusions that might be drawn from the discussion here.

First, a general methodological point seems to be in order. It is clearly dangerous to make general pronouncements about the syntax of a language based on a cursory examination of a single construction-type out of the many that the language offers. This is a problem that is encountered all too frequently and is especially common in discussions of linguistic typology; while it is to a certain extent necessary to try to generalize from limited data--that is, after all, what most linguists believe children do in learning their language--and while we are all trained to make the strongest claim possible that is consistent with the data at hand, nonetheless this is a practice that we all must be careful not to abuse.

Second, with regard to Basque, it can be concluded that this language clearly does not exhibit a syntax that shows the same type of alignment of core semantico-syntactic relations as do typical nonergative languages. The possible existence of any alignments of a nonergative-type, such as the one Anderson drew attention to, is far outweighed by alignments that are neither ergative nor nonergative in nature, such as the **-tzeko** pattern of (12) in which any of the core semantico-syntactic relations are eligible for a particular construction.

Third, more generally for syntactic typologies, the presence of a variety of syntactic alignments in Basque provides support for the tripartite division of the core semantico-syntactic relations in the manner Dixon (1979) has suggested into transitive subject, transitive object, and intransitive subject. In particular, transitive subject and intransitive subject are shown to be separate and distinct by the differential effect each exerts on relative head placement (see (14) and (15) above). Moreover, a distinction between transitive subject and transitive object is required by the construction exemplified in (16)--apparently an antipassive construction in which a semantically transitive sentence is syntactically detransitivized--where the introduction of the morpheme **ari** in (16b) triggers a change in the case marking of the nominal that is semantically a transitive subject (**Jon**) and in the form of the auxiliary verb, but not in the nominal that is semantically a transitive object but syntactically a "verbal adjunct" (**liburua**):

(16) a. Jonek liburua irakurtzen du
John/ERG.SG book/ABS.SG read/GER AUX/3SG.SUBJ+3SG.OBJ
'John reads the book' [Jonek as TS, liburua as TO]

b. Jon liburua irakurtzen ari da
John/ABS.SG book/ABS.SG read/GER ANTIPASS AUX/3SG.SUBJ
'John reads the book' [Jon as IS, liburua as "verbal adjunct"].

Given then that the grammar must distinguish TS from IS and TS from TO, a three-way division of these elements is called for.[8]

Finally, we can offer a typological contribution of our own. Unlike many other ergative languages, Basque does not display any "split ergativity",[9] by which ergative morphological patterns are found only in some formal categories--e.g. in nouns but not in

pronouns, in verbs of one tense or aspect but not in those of another, and so forth (see, for example, Comrie 1973, Dixon 1979 for discussion). It would thus seem that in such a language--contrary to Anderson's claims--the morphology would as likely as not give speakers a ready indicator of the language's syntactic organization, especially when there is no surface syntactic evidence to the contrary. Admittedly, Basque syntax does not conclusively show ergative alignments, but neither does it really show significant nonergative ones, so that the morphology would be the most available clue to a speaker regarding the alignments to be found in the syntax. We suggest then that the presence or absence of morphologically governed ergative splits should be taken as a revealing--and realistic--parameter for typologizing ergative languages, and that this be treated as intersecting with the further parameter of overt evidence of ergativity in the syntax versus no such overt syntactic ergativity. A set of cross-cutting continua thus emerges as a way of classifying languages as to ergativity/nonergativity, as listed in (17):

(17) a. ergative with no splits -- ergative with some splits --nonergative
b. overt syntactic ergativity --neutrality -- overt syntactic nonergativity.

The parameters in such a typology would constitute continua along which languages could be placed, and they are thus in keeping with claims noted earlier that ergativity is not a binary parameter and that languages can be ergative to a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, (17b) can be further treated as a scalar parameter by considering the extent of overt syntactic ergativity or nonergativity present in the language.

We would argue then that the most ergative language would be one with no split ergativity and thoroughly ergative syntax--a combination which may not yet be documented--while a language like Basque with no splits but with essentially neutral syntax, i.e. with some ergative patterns, some nonergative patterns, but most that are neither one nor the other, would rank somewhere lower down on the scale of ergativity, but nowhere near the bottom of the ladder. In such a view, Basque would qualify as fairly ergative in nature overall, and would thus have to be judged innocent of Anderson's charges that, at least as far as its syntax is concerned, it is nonergative.

FOOTNOTES

1. During discussion after our presentation of this paper, we were informed that Anderson in fact has retracted his claims about Basque. A search through various recent articles of Anderson's on ergativity and/or morphology, including ergative morphology (Anderson 1977, 1982, 1984a, 1984b, 1986), in which mention of his Basque analysis might have been made, however, yielded no reference to Basque and thus no retraction. In fact, from footnote 1 of the 1984b paper (p. 169), it is clear that Anderson maintains the basic claim of his 1976 paper, namely that most ergative languages have nonergative alignment in their syntax, for he writes: "the existence of such languages [as Dyirbal, with truly ergative syntax] ... actually increases the significance of the conclusion elsewhere, since it establishes the point that the correspondence between morphology and syntax which 'ergative' languages suggest is actually a possible one, *though incorrect in*

most instances " [emphasis added/KA, BDJ, JS]. This statement falls short of retracting the claims about Basque, though it is consistent with a retraction. In any case, even if such a retraction appears in a source we are not aware of, what we do here can be taken as laying out the reasons why such a retraction is in order with regard to Basque.

2. In a sense, then, we are examining here whether Basque is "innocent" or "guilty" of the charge that it is nonergative, and more generally whether in such cases, languages are innocent until proven guilty.

3. These three abbreviations--IS, TS, and TO--correspond to the S, A, and O of Dixon (1979: 61), and our diagram follows that found in Dixon's article. We have chosen our terms and abbreviations for purposes of maximal transparency for the reader. In particular, the potential for confusion over terminology is great; for example, in traditional Basque grammatical terminology, what we call the "absolutive" case is called **nominatiboa**(!).

4. It should be clear that the notions "intransitive verb" or "transitive verb" as category labels in this framework are not to be understood as identical with their conventional definitions. In particular, the category "transitive verb" (TV) is defined as those elements that combine with a noun phrase to form a member of the category "intransitive verb" (IV), which is defined as those elements that can combine further to form a sentence, and so forth. What is conventionally referred to as a transitive verb phrase, then, such as see a dog or build a house, in this framework can serve as a member of the IV category, for they can combine with a noun phrase to form a sentence (e.g. The boys see the dog or John and Mary build a house). See Trechsel 1982 and references there for further discussion.

5. We note that Dixon (1979: 116) expresses some doubts about Anderson's conclusions regarding Tongan.

6. There are some compounds that belie such a generalization, for example, Indian-giving (<--- (giving as) an indian (supposedly) gives, not <--- PRO gives an indian), and Mad Hungarian Printing [the name of a Columbus printing shop] (<--- the Mad Hungarian prints things, not <--- PRO prints Mad Hungarians).

7. Implicit in such a line of argumentation are two assumptions: that the proper generalization regarding (14) and (15) hinges on the status of the relative clause subject, and that however these facts are to be accounted for in any framework, somehow reference--even indirect--to the distinction between transitive and intransitive subjects must be incorporated into the account.

8. At the same time, though, it must be remembered out that the grammar of Basque treats all three core relations alike in some ways, e.g. with respect to what can serve as a missing argument in some adverbial clausal constructions.

9. Dixon (1979: 63, fn. 7) states that Basque, while not showing any split ergativity in the marking of nominal constituents (e.g. with a difference between nouns and pronouns), nonetheless shows a type of split in its verb agreement system which, he says, "appears to operate on a partly accusative, partly ergative basis". It is unclear to us exactly which types of facts in Basque led Dixon to this statement, but even if it proves to be an accurate description of Basque verb agreement, the crucial observation for our purposes--the lack of purely morphologically governed split ergativity in Basque--would still stand.

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